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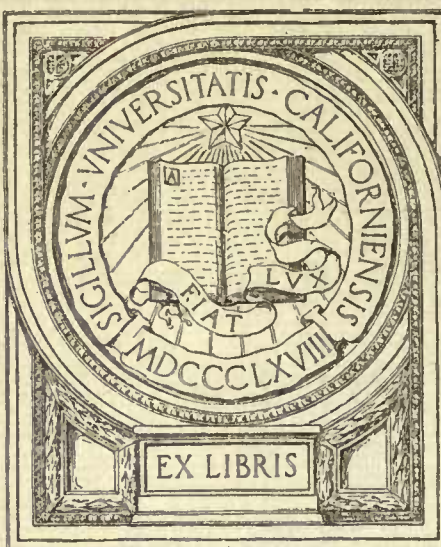
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POULTRY CULLING

Prepared by R. B. EASSON

Trapnesting and scientific breeding are more reliable and much more far reaching in results than judging the productive ability of fowls by means of body characteristics such as conformation, pigment color tests, etc. These latter tests, however, which are visible or can be determined by handling, are fairly accurate during certain seasons of the year, and therefore aid the commercial poultryman and farm flock owner in culling the low producers and indicating the better producers that are to be kept as layers or breeders for the following season.

The culling out of the unprofitable layers will increase the average productiveness of the flock and lower the feed bill. The use of the best layers as breeding stock will aid in building up the laying qualities of the offspring, especially if males out of high producing females are mated to these better layers.

WHEN TO CULL

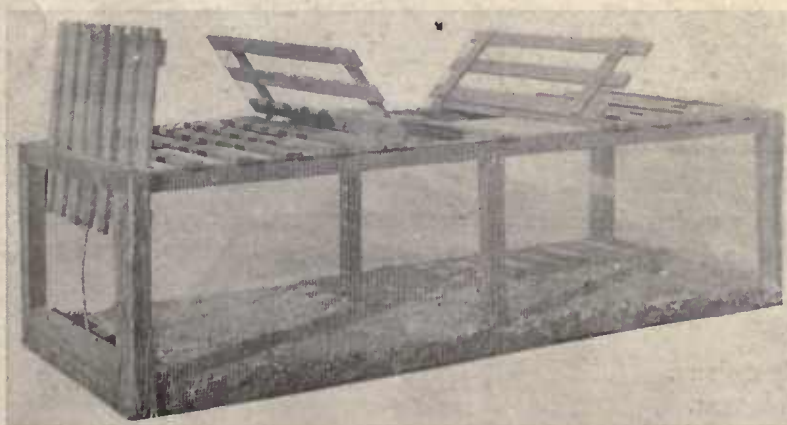
The general management, and the use of electric lights especially, will influence the time of culling. As a general rule, flocks should be gradually culled beginning with the decrease of egg production (May and June) and heavily culled during July and August. For the selection of breeders to be used the following season an additional separation can be made even later.

CULLING POINTERS

Practical culling will give best results by using a combination of tests to eliminate the poor producers rather than using one test alone.

Molting.—The molting of a fowl before September 1st is one indication of a poor layer. These poor producers in the flock molt early and slowly and do not produce as many eggs as generally supposed during the fall and winter months. The majority of their eggs are produced during the spring months. The better producers lay late and hence molt late (see Pl. II) and fast. Cull the early molters in July and August.

Pigment Color Changes.—With the yellow shanked varieties the amount of coloring material in shanks, beaks, earlobes, and skin (especially at the vent) is a fairly accurate guide to the laying ability of different fowls of the same flock. The amount of yellow coloring material contained in the ration fed may effect the



The catching coop permits the convenient handling of the flock at all times. It is especially useful during the culling season.



PLATE I.—The early molter decreases the average egg yield of the flock and increases the cost of production. Hens molting in June, July, and August should be culled heavily and replaced with pullets from good breeding stock.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULLS

1. Early molters.
2. Yellow vent.
3. Yellow shanks.
4. Yellow beaks.
5. Yellow earlobes.
6. Yellow skin.
7. Non-flexible pelvic bones.
8. Shriveled up comb.
9. Small body capacity.
10. Poor condition.

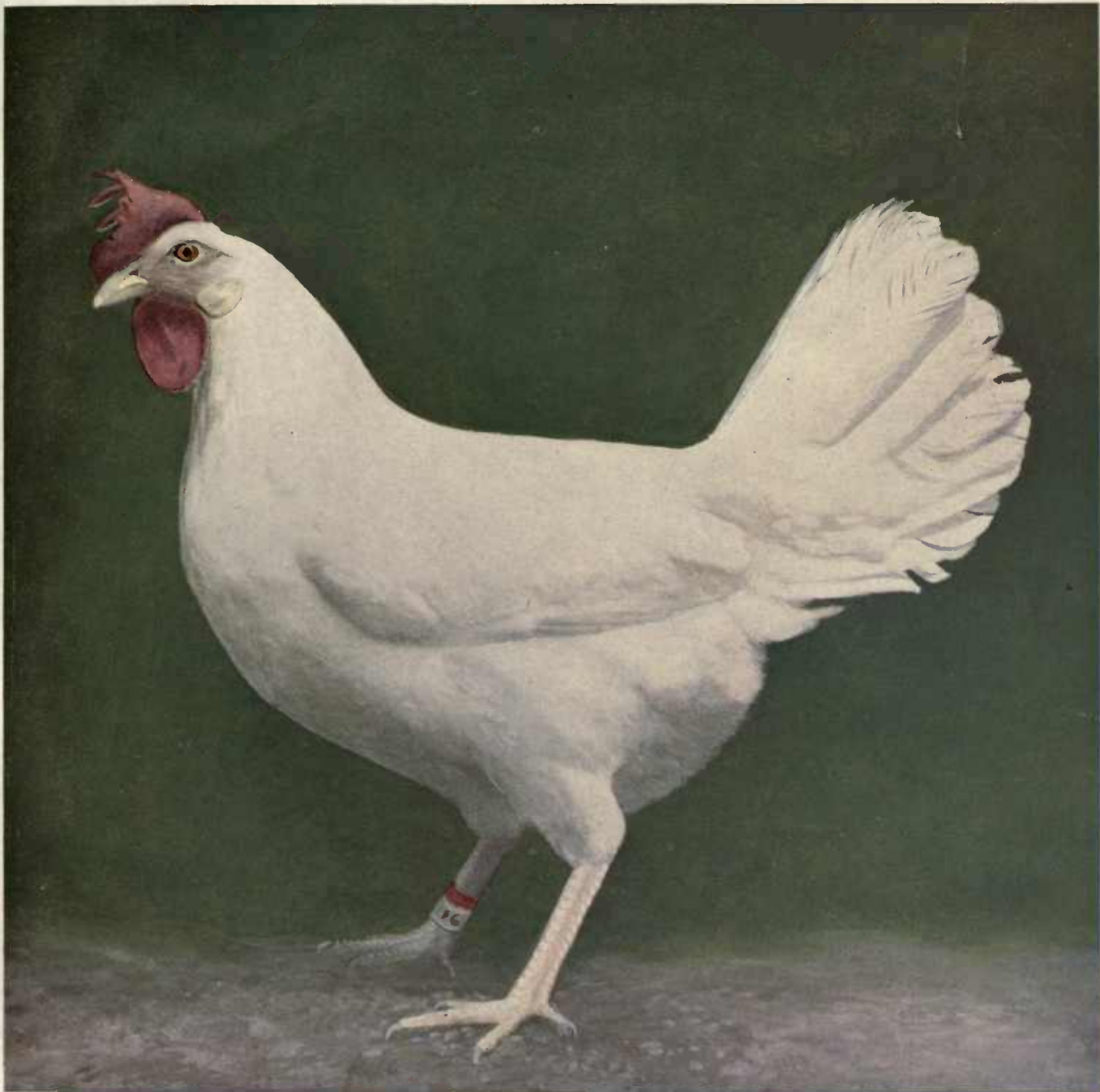


PLATE II.—This hen produced 297 eggs at the Santa Cruz egg laying contest for the year ending November 15, 1920. She molted December 10, 1920, and was back to production January 20, 1921. The type to keep as layer or breeder.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRODUCERS

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Late molters. | 6. Pale skin. |
| 2. Pale vent. | 7. Flexible pelvic bones. |
| 3. Pale shanks. | 8. Comb red, full and waxy. |
| 4. Pale beaks. | 9. Good body capacity. |
| 5. Pale earlobes. | 10. Good condition. |

rate of change from yellow to paleness. The yellow color is withdrawn from the body as production increases and gradually returns with the molt when few eggs are laid. The use of the pigment color test is of most value during June, July, and August. The early molters of a flock with yellow coloring in shanks, beak, earlobes, and skin after July 1st are usually culls.

Body Capacity.—The distance between the end of keel bone and ends of pelvic bones is a measurement of abdominal capacity. The laying hen must have a good sized abdomen in which to digest feed and manufacture eggs. In the good layer the abdomen should be full, soft, and flexible. During the summer months fowls measuring less than three fingers between these points are usually culls, as shown by other indications.

Pelvic Bones.—Pelvic bones should be thin, straight, and flexible. They tend to thicken on the ends as the hen gets older. The cull generally has pelvic bones which are thick, near together, and not flexible as in the good layers.

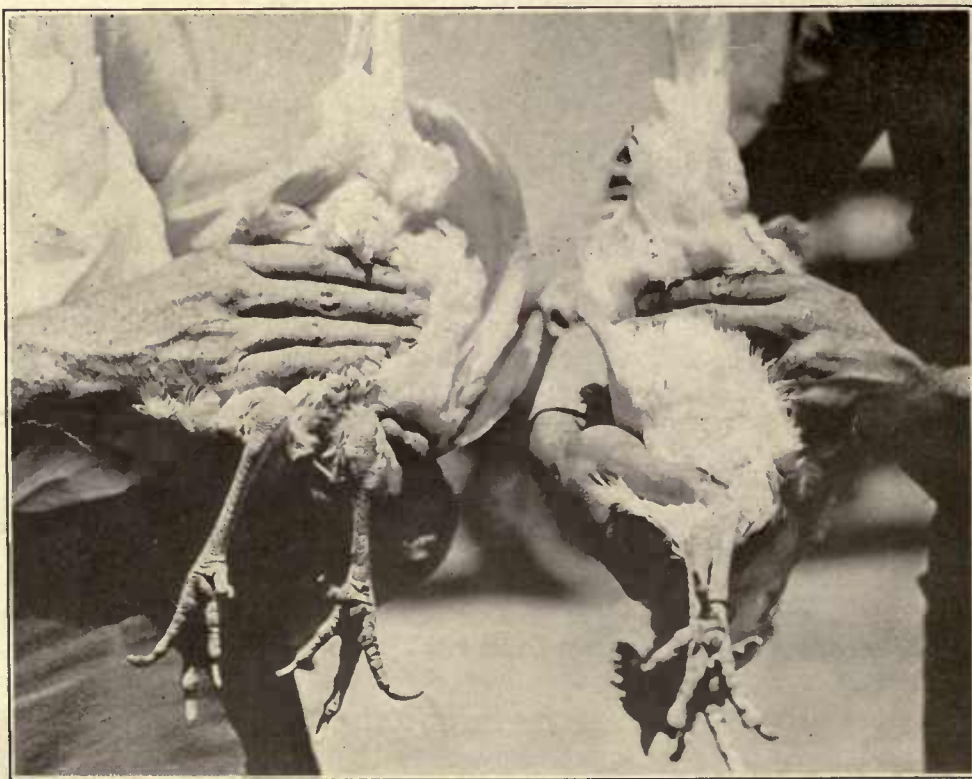
Comb and Wattles.—The size of the comb, in relation to the size for that breed, is correlated with the hen's laying ability. The comb and wattles of a good layer are red, full, and waxy. In the poor layers these are shriveled and scaly. (Pls. I and II.)

PULLET MARKING

The use of colored leg bands (see Pl. II) to identify those pullets that are early maturing and winter egg producers will prove valuable during the culling period. A large percentage of these early maturing pullets will be late molters the following year, one indication of high yearly production, and therefore the type to keep for layers or breeders the following year.

HOW TO CULL

The Catching Coop.—This coop is a very convenient appliance and useful throughout the year either for sorting, transferring fowls between pens and houses, or culling. The front end of the coop is pushed tightly against the house exit, a coopful of fowls run in and the sliding door closed. The fowls can be taken out through one of the top doors and examined individually. A convenient size for such a coop is 5 feet long, 2 feet wide, 1½ feet in height.



Body capacity as indicated by abdominal measurement between the keel and pelvic bones. (Left—The laying hen with full, soft, and flexible abdomen measuring four fingers. (Right)—The cull with contracted and hard abdomen measuring two fingers.

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